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Defining the role of the elementary counselor requires comparison with, and contrast to, the role of the school psycholigist. In preparation, the psychologist receives training similar to that of the counselor, with additional work in learning theory, psychological testing, and, perhaps, psychotherapy and case analysis. In function, both study individual pupils, recommend special programs where appropriate, consult with teachers and administrators, and serve as liaison between school and community. Major differences are in the psychologist's depth of preparation, wider variety of diagnostic and therapeutic techniques, and, concomitantly, his presumed greater insight and knowledge. The counselor is more frequently school-based, and has more continuous contact with teachers and children than does the psychologist, who may serve an entire district. (BP)

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THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST AND THE ELEMENTARY COUNSELOR*

How does the school psychologist and the elementary counselor best work together in a school setting? There can and should be many patterns of organization--varieties of roles and ways specialists relate depending upon the unique factors involved in each particular school.

Many administrators are asking, "If I hire an elementary counselor, what does he do? What does he do that is different from what our school psychologist does? How do they work together?"

Many school districts throughout the United States do not have elementary counselors. Many have added a few elementary counselors as a result of funds made available through the National Defense Education Act for either the establishment or the improvement of elementary counseling programs, and a few school districts have had elementary counselors for many years, but these are the exception. Long Beach Unified School District is one of these, with a program that began in 1927 with five elementary counselors and today includes 40.

It is somewhat difficult to be precise in defining the standard role of the elementary counselor. Dr. Harold Cottingham of the State University of Florida was funded by the U.S. Office of Education to write a statement defining the role and function of the elementary counselor. He travelled throughout the United States interviewing many people in education who had experience in the field of elementary counseling in colleges, universities and public schools. I served on a committee last spring to review his findings, and one of the biggest problems that confronted him was the wide variety of opinion as to what the education of an elementary counselor should consist of and what their role should be. Probably a similar tour of research on the role and function of the school psychologist would have yielded the same results. Certainly there is some overlap in educational preparation for the elementary counselor and the school psychologist--great overlap in goals and objectives, and additional overlap in FUNCTION.

Perhaps it is safe to say that the preparation of the school psychologist includes much that is basic to the program for elementary counseling, plus additional courses and field work in learning theory; the use, diagnosis, and interpretation of tests; and, perhaps, individual and group therapy and case analysis.

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The California Association of School Psychometrists and Psychologists recently issued this brochure which defines functions and purposes of the school psychologist. It is interesting to look at these with the role of the elementary counselor in mind. Let us compare. According to this brochure, the school psychologist has the following functions and purposes:

1. He assesses intellectual and educational characteristis of children, including the administration of individual psychological tests, and assists in the planning, evaluating and interpreting of group testing programs, to describe learning aptitudes more accurately and to evaluate the achievement of skills and knowledge.

2. He gathers basic information necessary for the understanding of the pupil to interpret his present learning status in terms of his educational history and his motivation pattern.

3. He makes verbal and written reports that organize information about a pupil to assist school staff in formulating and specifying appropriate plans for educational and behavioral management.

4. He studies and assists the individual pupil, using extensive and intensive psychological techniques to assess his psychological functioning in order to assist him with critical learning or behavioral problems.

5. He recommends appropriate educational and psychological remediation for exceptional children to accommodate their unique learning and psychological needs.

6. He determines eligibility for or recommends pupil placement in special programs or classes to evaluate educational strengths and weaknesses of a student and recommend means of dealing with them in the particular school setting.

7. He participates in planning, executing and assessing programs of education and re-education for pupils to aid in developing the best possible learning programs for all children and to evaluate the product of the educational effort.

8. He provides appropriate inservice training and consultive services to assist school staff . .

members to better understand behavior and learning patterns of children and to apply these understandings in promoting an improved climate for learning.

9. He plans and executes research projects for the improvement of the educational program to obtain a foundation of accurately interpreted facts upon which future programs can be built.

10. He serves in a liaison relationship between the school, the community and community agencies in the understanding and treatment of learning and behavior problems to interpret the school to the community and to utilize fully all community resources in helping youth lead full and wholesome lives.

Now I would like to compare the role of the elementary counselor in Long Beach with the above list of functions.

1. The elementary counselor in Long Beach certainly assesses the intellectual and educational characteristics of children. They help with the giving, evaluating, and interpreting of the group testing programs. They <u>do not</u> administer individual psychological tests.

2. The elementary counselors are responsible for gathering basic information necessary for the understanding of the pupil.

3. The elementary counselors make verbal and written reports that organize information about a pupil.

4. The elementary counselor studies and assists the individual pupil, using extensive psychological techniques, <u>but not</u> as extensive or intensive as the psychologist.

5. They recommend appropriate educational and psychological remediation for exceptional children, with the help many times of the greater depth of knowledge and understanding of the psychologist.

6. The elementary counselor determines eligibility for or recommends pupil placement in

special programs or classes with the help and advice of the psychologist. State Law in California demands that the psychologist make the recommendation for certain programs.

7. The elementary counselor in Long Beach helps in the planning, executing and assessing of programs of education and re-education for pupils.

8. They provide appropriate inservice training and consultive services to teachers. Likewise the psychologist provides inservice training for counselors as well as administrators and teachers.

9. The elementary counselors help with research projects often initiated by the research department or the psychologist.

10. The elementary counselor certainly serves as liaison between the school, the community and community agencies in the understanding and treatment of learning and behavior problems.

It would appear that the major differences are in the depth of preparation, the wider variety of diagnostic and therapeutic skills acquired, the quality of assessment and insight, and the ability to prescribe proper learning experiences based on this greater insight and knowledge.

Other differences in role are due to the organization of services. More frequently elementary counselors are school-based while school psychologists work out of the central office serving several schools. The elementary counselor therefore has more continuous contacts with teachers and children as a member of the school staff, and this is significant.

How then do we answer the question of what is the proper role of the school psychologist and the elementary counselor, and how should they relate to each other? In my opinion, many patterns should emerge as each school district examines certain factors that are unique to them:

1. The total number of guidance specialists hired by the district.

2. The educational preparation and skills of the various specialists, regardless of title.

3. The guidance services that should be made available to students, parents, and teachers--that the district is financially able to provide.

4. What services are now being provided and by whom.

5. Who is the best qualified to perform them.

And then, any state laws that dictate role of the pupil personnel specialists should be examined.

Once these unique factors are known, a district can begin to intelligently decide what the role of the elementary counselor and school psychologist should be and how they can best work together.

Certain agreed upon principles should also influence decisions related to role and relationships. I would like to suggest four that to me are important:

1. Use of psychological knowledge is a shared responsibility of all adults who influence the life of a child--teachers, as well as counselors and psychologists.

2. Psychological services should be available to all children, not just those with learning handicaps.

3. Psychological services should be concerned not only with the prevention and remediation of learning problems, but the general education, total development, and optimum learning of all children.

4. Special knowledge is to be shared--not hoarded.

If this last principle is accepted it has far reaching effects on the relationship between the school psychologist and the elementary counselor.

The school psychologist would then have an obligation to increase the knowledge and skill of the elementary counselor so that he will better understand behavior, child development, and the learning process, and the meaning of test results, and be able to help the teacher fit the curriculum to the particular needs of each child.

Likewise the counselor has an obligation to share his specialized knowledge and skills with the teacher so that the teacher, who is

the most influential school person in the life of each child, will become the first line of defense in the area of guidance.

In the same way, the school social worker should improve the effectiveness of the elementary counselor as he works with the parents of children with learning and behavior problems and helps families make use of community resources when problems are beyond the help of school services.

No school district can afford the specialist who tries to "save" a child by himself with testing, treatment, and a written report. They cannot afford it financially, and, more important, they cannot afford to deny children the benefit of better informed counselors and teachers.

If we accept this belief, we see that school psychologists of the future will work with the school counselor in the school setting as a team, together performing many of the same functions, but with the psychologist acting as a consultant with greater and more specialized knowledge. We see the elementary counselor carrying on after the psychologist has moved on to another school, and performing much better because of the help of the psychologist.

The psychologist of the future must not only be able and comfortable, working in a one-to-one relationship with a child or an adult, but must be effective working with groups, able to effectively hold inservice meetings with groups of counselors and teachers, and able to counsel groups of children and adults.

The school psychologist of the future will increasingly feel a responsibility for seeing that his insights regarding a child are understood and applied by the teacher. He will see the elementary counselor as an extension of his own services to the teacher.

For example, an increasing number of diagnostic instruments have been and will be made available to discover particular learning disabilities. As the number of tests increase and are found to be valid, psychologists should be able to more accurately determine why certain children have difficulty with learning. But this increased knowledge will be of no value unless the TEACHER is helped to provide the proper learning experiences for each child.

School psychologists will be hard pressed for time to use these tests and also follow through with the teacher on each child.

It may well be that with the help of the school psychologists, elementary counselors will be able to give many of these tests to children, interpret the results to the classroom teacher,

and help her select suitable learning experiences for specific children, if school psychologists provide the counselor with proper inservice education and supervision.

Thus, the relationship between the school psychologist and the elementary counselor would be one of TEAM WORK with the elementary counselor learning as much as possible from the school psychologist so that, with supervision, these new learnings can be used with teachers, parents and children.

Elementary counselors should avoid two possible dangers:

1. Acquiring more functions than can successfully be carried out.

2. Becoming "junior psychologists".

Rather, elementary counselors should be GENERALISTS who coordinate the services of all guidance specialists so that teachers, children, and parents benefit from many specialities.

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